

Coronavirus pandemic

'Full blown' pandemic phase of Covid nearly over in US, declares Anthony Fauci

Biden's top medical adviser says Americans will soon make 'own decisions' on dealing with virus



Anthony Fauci signalled the Biden administration was preparing to let local health departments take the lead in managing the virus
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Kiran Stacey in Washington YESTERDAY

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The US is heading out of the “full blown” pandemic phase of Covid-19, Joe Biden’s chief medical adviser said, as he predicted a combination of vaccinations, treatments and prior infection would soon make the virus more manageable.

Dr Anthony Fauci told the Financial Times he hoped there would be an end to all pandemic-related restrictions in the coming months including mandatory wearing of masks.

In his most [optimistic comments](#) about the trajectory of the pandemic since the emergence of the Omicron coronavirus variant, Fauci outlined a scenario in which local health departments would lead the response to the virus rather than the Biden administration.

Fauci said: “As we get out of the full-blown pandemic phase of Covid-19, which we are certainly heading out of, these decisions will increasingly be made on a local level rather than centrally decided or mandated. There will also be more people making their own decisions on how they want to deal with the virus.”

Asked when restrictions might end, he said he hoped it would be “soon”, and agreed with the suggestion it was likely to happen this year. But he warned local health departments could reintroduce measures temporarily if outbreaks were detected in the community.

Fauci’s comments added to a growing sense of optimism among health officials across the developing world that the Omicron variant [may herald the end](#) of the most damaging phase of the pandemic.

The director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases has been one of the most cautious voices in the US on the pandemic and [frequently contradicted](#) Donald Trump when he felt the former president was playing down the risks of the virus.

More than 900,000 people have died in the US of Covid-19. While the country’s daily death toll remains close to record levels, new infections have [begun to fall rapidly](#), following similar declines in countries such as South Africa and the UK.

Fauci would not repeat the assertion by some world leaders that the virus is [now becoming “endemic”](#). But he talked about the possibility it will soon reach an “equilibrium”, where the government no longer has to pay such close attention to infection levels.

“There is no way we are going to eradicate this virus,” he said. “But I hope we are looking at a time when we have enough people vaccinated and enough people with protection from previous infection that the Covid restrictions will soon be a thing of the past.”

He added that he did not think every American would need [regular vaccine boosters](#) to keep the virus at bay. “It will depend on who you are,” he said. “But if you are a normal, healthy 30-year-old person with no underlying conditions, you might need a booster only every four or five years.”

Fauci said his agency is planning for the next pandemic, focusing on monitoring viruses and families of viruses that are known to create severe illness. Dealing with future outbreaks would require a mix of vaccines and therapeutics, he added.

But he pushed back [against criticisms](#) that public health officials had been too reliant on vaccines for eliminating Covid.

“Right from the beginning of the outbreak we were testing for therapeutic approaches,” he said, pointing to the [development of remdesivir](#), a treatment that was “found within the first month or two” of the pandemic.

“Now it is one of the five interventions that can keep patients out of the hospital,” he added.

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